

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A system of controlling the distribution of pills between a

2 manufacturer and a consumer, said system comprising:

3 a machine-readable code on a surface of each of said pills, said code
4 conveying information relating to one of lot number, date of manufacture, date of
5 expiration, manufacturer, location of manufacturer, and National Drug Code number;

6 and

7 a scanner adapted to read said machine-readable code of said at least one
8 of said pills ~~so that information conveyed by said code may be interpreted~~; and

9 means for scanning ^{A Scanner Arranged to Scan}
10 ~~said~~ at least one of said pills during the distribution

11 between said manufacturer and said consumer ~~so that said scanned pill may be identified~~
12 ~~according to said interpreted information, and its distribution thereby controlled.~~

13 2. A pill containing a drug and having a surface, said pill comprising:

14 a machine-readable code located on said surface, said code relating to one
15 of drug information, manufacturing information, and contraindications of the drug.

16 3. ^A The ~~pill~~ according to claim 2, wherein said pill includes a

17 transparent layer defining an outer surface and an inner surface, said code being located
18 on said inner surface so that said code may be machine-read through said transparent
19 layer.

1 4. The pill according to claim 2, wherein said pill has an outer surface
2 that is generally rough and porous and defines a total surface area, said pill including a
3 code-receiving region, said code receiving region including a layer of material made from
4 one of gelatin, keratin, collagen wax, sugar, protein, plastic, and sugar-based composition,
5 said code receiving region having a surface area that is less than said total surface area of
6 said pill.

1 6. ^A The pill according to claim 2, wherein said machine-readable code is
2 a 2-dimensional, high-density bar code matrix.

1 7. ^A The pill according to claim 6, wherein said 2-dimensional, high-
2 density bar code matrix is PDF-417 type bar code.

1 8. A pill ^{according to claim 1} having a machine readable code thereon, the code having a
2 coded pattern that is too difficult for an unaided human eye after glancing the coded
3 pattern to discern differences within the coded pattern that may distinguish the coded
4 pattern from others of the same type.

1 9. A pill as in claim 8, wherein the coded pattern lacks alphanumeric
2 characters.

1 10. A pill as in claim 8, further comprising a label on which is printed the
2 machine readable code, said label being on a body of the pill.

1 11. A pill as in claim 8, wherein the pill is any one of a tablet and capsule.

1 12. A pill as in claim 8, wherein the code is of a dimension that is at most
2 one-tenth a size of a standard UPC bar code.

1 13. A process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill, comprising

2 the steps of:

- 3 a) providing a thin sheet of biocompatible material;
- 4 b) applying said code onto one surface of said thin sheet; and
- 5 c) adhering said thin sheet to said surface of said pill.

1 14. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill, according
2 to claim 13, wherein the step of applying includes printing said code onto said one
3 surface.

1 15. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill, according
2 to claim 13, wherein the step of applying includes embossing said code into said one
3 surface.

1 16. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill according
2 to claim 13, wherein the step of providing a thin sheet of biocompatible material includes
3 providing a thin layer of gelatin mounted on a release sheet and said further including a
4 step of removing said release sheet from said gelatin so that said gelatin remains adhered
5 to said one surface of said pill.

1 17. The process for applying a bar code to a surface of a pill according
2 to claim 16, wherein said adhering step includes applying water to one of said one
3 surface and said gelatin layer.

1 18. A method of avoiding confusion between pills, comprising the steps of:
2 reading a machine readable code on a pill with a reader wherein the
3 machine readable code includes a coded pattern that is too difficult for an unaided
4 human eye after glancing the coded pattern to discern differences within the coded
5 pattern that may distinguish the coded pattern from others of the same type; and
6 identifying any one of a source, distributor, and contents of the pill based
7 on the step of reading.

1 19. A method as in claim 18, wherein the code is read from a label on the
2 pill.

1 20. A method as in claim 18, wherein the code is read from an imprint
2 directly on the pill.

1 21. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 determining the distributor of the pill for purposes of tracking gray goods.

1 22. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the contents while reading the code on pills having any one of a same shape
3 and a same color.

1 23. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the source of a plurality of pills within a common container for purposes of
3 determining whether all came from a common source.

1 24. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the source for purposes of distinguishing between a brand name supplier and
3 a generic supplier of the pills.

1 25. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the contents for purposes of conducting clinical trials.

1 26. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the contents of successive pills and make an indication if taking the successive
3 pills at the same time would cause the medication each contains to chemically react with
4 any one of each other and the body environment in a medically undesirable manner.

1 27. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes
2 identifying the contents for purposes of sorting medication of different contents.

1 28. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of identifying includes

2 identifying the contents for the purpose of making a medical evaluation of a person
3 taking the pill.

1 29. A method as in claim 18, wherein the step of reading is carried out
2 with a scanner that emits a laser beam to strike on an area of the machined readable
3 code.

1 30. A method as in claim 18, further comprising the step of recording a
2 timing of the step of reading and storing in a data base information containing the
3 timing and that which was read during the step of reading.

1 31. A method as in claim 30, further concerning the step of reading a
2 further coded pattern indicative of nutrition and diet and storing the further coded
3 pattern in the data base.

1 32. A method of efficacy record keeping, comprising the steps of:
2 (a) scanning a coded pattern from which medication contents may be
3 correlated;
4 (b) clocking a time of day that the scanning is carried out;
5 (c) further scanning of other coded patterns from which nutritional items
6 may be correlated;
7 (d) clocking the step of further scanning;
8 (e) signaling commencement and ending of efficacy of the medication;
9 (f) clocking the step of signaling; and
10 (g) storing results of steps (a) to (f).

1 33. A method as in claim 32, further comprising the step of deriving the
2 medication contents and the food items from the stored results of step (g) based on
3 correlating with information in a data base; and retrieving the results from step (g)
4 timing information corresponding to that which was clocked.

1 34. A method as in claim 32, further comprising the steps of evaluating
2 steps (a) to (g) for a situation that is less than optimal for a duration of efficacy of the
3 medication and indicating a warning in response to finding the situation as a result of the
4 step of evaluating.

1 35. A method of conducting a clinical trial of pills, comprising the steps of:
2 providing a plurality of pills each having an alpha-numeric code readable
3 with an unaided eye and a machine readable code that too difficult for an unaided
4 human eye after glancing of the coded pattern to discern differences within the coded
5 pattern that may distinguish the coded pattern from others of the same type, said
6 patterns being different on a group of the pills and the alpha-numeric code being
7 identical on said group of the pills; and
8 scanning the machine readable code to determine whether the pills being
9 scanned at any given time is a placebo.

1 36. A method of conducting a clinical trial of pills, comprising the steps of:
2 providing a plurality of pills each within a package, at least one of the
3 package and the pill having an alpha-numeric code readable with an unaided eye and a
4 machine readable code whose patterns fail to be discernable from a glance with the
5 unaided eye to distinguish over those of a same type, said patterns that are associated
6 with a group of said pills being different from each other and the alpha-numeric codes
7 that are associated with said group of the pills being identical with each other; and

8 scanning the machine readable code to determine whether any of the pills
9 within the packages being scanned at any given time is a placebo.

3 forming the pill by layers one atop the other, the layers including an inner
4 layer, an outer layer and an intermediate layer between the inner and outer layers, the
5 step of forming including forming the intermediate layer by printing with a substance
6 that is edible and digestible.

38. A method as in claim 37, wherein the step of printing with the substance forms part of the medication contents.

39. A method as in claim 37, wherein the printing arranges the substance in a manner that is machine readable code.

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